

**Amendments to the Specifications**

Please replace paragraph [0020] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0020] In a preferred version of the flat sealing ring according to the invention, the stiffening ring is produced from the same material as the protective layer disposed over the base ring, and formed as a single piece with this protective layer. This is quite particularly advantageous if the material is a chemically stable material, in particular, PTFE or PTFE-like materials. In the case of this variant, the stiffening ring has the same advantageous chemical stability against corrosion, as a result of which the stability of the stiffening ring is substantially improved compared with other materials such as, for example, a metal stiffening ring. Since the protective layer is generally in the form of a relatively thin film, the material of the stiffening ring formed as a single piece with the protective layer has a greater material thickness, in order to achieve the desired height of the stiffening ring. Particularly suitable for forming the stiffening ring and protective layer as a single piece are those chemically stable materials which are essentially non-compressible or only slightly compressible, in order to also fulfill the mechanical requirements for the stiffening ring. PTFE is a suitable material for this purpose. In some aspects, hard plastic or metal can be used for both the stiffening ring and the protective layer.